"NOBLY PLANNED."

BY M. B. MANWELL, AUTHOR OF "THE BENTS OF BATTERSBY," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER III.

SETTLING DOWN.

"AND so the Cleeve girls are to have the Round House until the three of them are married, and the rents of the two farms to live on, while young Geoff walks back to his situation in London not a penny the richer!"

The village of Brimsby held up its hands as one man when the contents of Uncle Phil's will became known.

"Yes! meantime that is. When the girls marry, Geoff will step into the property intact, for the Squire had no large fortunes to leave his nieces. There's a certain sum banked which is to be divided into three equal portions, one for each of the girls, to buy her wedding outfit and house linen; a tidy sum, but not what anybody could call a fortune." It was Lawyer Smythe, glad enough to have his lips unsealed, who was thus dealing out the news to eager listeners.

"And suppose that none of the three ever marry, what then?" asked a voice. "There's just the possibility."

"It will be in this way, you see," said the lawyer. "If none, or if only two of the girls marry before they are thirty-five, the farms will be divided, Geoff taking one, his sisters or sister the other farm, with a life-tenancy of the Round House, which will not fall into Geoff's hands until their deaths. It's fair enough when you come to look into the thing. The old Squire put Geoff into a capital way to become a rising man; he will stand on his own feet pretty soon, if he keep steady; it is altogether in his own hands. And it balances things fairly, his getting one of the farms, by-and-by, if the girls keep him out of the whole property by not marrying. Finally, he or his heirs will have the Round House, and that sum I spoke of in the bank, which is only to be drawn in the event of marriage—or of any unexpected necessity. That's down in the will, the Squire would have it so; of course, I couldn't advise him past it."

The Round House stood back from the village green upon, which its wide gate opened. It was a comfortable, much-added-to building, round in form, and the rooms were consequently quaintly-shaped, the little circular hall being the nucleus off which they opened. Through the shrubbery just now came Geoff Cleeve, a tall, slenderly-built young man under five-and-twenty. His face was pale to sallowness; his hair and eyebrows dark, but his eyes were a light blue. He was a human contradiction, personally. Eyes and hair and complexion were all at variance; and his mouth, with its weak lines, did not belong to his heavy jaw. Nature did not seem to have made up her mind exactly about the type on which she was to mould him. And, unhappily, Geoff's exterior did not greatly belie his character. He was not all bad; few of us are. But Geoff was too weak to be good, and too good to be out-and-out evil. A vast amount of human misery is packed up in such a temperament. Already were the signs of a coming discord to be easily read when Geoff raised his pale-blue eyes, which were filled with a strange, bewildered anguish. They were the windows out of which looked a soul that had lost its way. Their

owner had fallen upon evil courses; he had a background of debts already, and the unexpected tenour of Uncle Phil's will proved a profound shock to him. As Geoff entered the room where his sisters were, a gloomy frown settled down on his brow at sight of their expectant faces. In his heart, he was beginning to hate the girls who stood between him and the money he coveted to finger.

"Geoff!" said a clear, soft voice from the window, "don't go away, dear!" for the young man was sullenly retreating, "we want to talk over our plans about the future with you."

"I thought your future needed no talking over. It seems to me to be as promising for you girls as it is disastrous for myself!" Geoff threw himself into Uncle Phil's favourite arm-chair as he discontentedly spoke, and a little cloud passed over the faces of his listeners. It hurt each of the girls to see Uncle Phil's place so carelessly usurped, as it were.

"I don't know about its being disastrous for you, Geoff," began Barbara, raising her beautiful head proudly. "I hope we shan't keep you out of the Round House very long!" Then, as the meaning of her hope rushed into Barbara's mind, a burning blush swept over her face, and it was reflected on the faces of her two sisters.

"I hope to goodness you won't!" said Geoff desperately, his miserable blue eyes glancing furtively from one to another of the girls. Then his sisters knew that from Geoff was to be expected no help in the strange, new position they found themselves placed in. Hitherto, the rock and foundation of the household had been Uncle Phil himself. It was, therefore, an alarming prospect for the girls to take the reins in their own unaccustomed fingers, a prospect they shrank before.

"*We* had nothing to do with it, Geoff!" said Nell; and she added eagerly, "We are more sorry than you are for your disappointment."

"That's rubbish!" curtly said Geoff. "You girls talk such cant you make one wild. It's hard lines for a fellow to have to march back to his grind with empty pockets as I've got to do!"

"But," said Barbara, quickly, "you have a fair salary; Uncle Phil always said so. And you've good prospects of rising, so your pockets can't be empty."

"Can't they!" Geoff spoke grimly. "All I know is that I haven't a sovereign to pay my way to London."

"Why didn't you bring money enough to carry you back?" asked Anne, pertinently.

"Because, Madame Anne, I never dreamed I'd have to go back; I thought——" Geoff hesitated.

"You thought," said Barbara slowly, her fair face taking on a certain sternness, "that you would simply sit down for life—in dear old Uncle Phil's place."

"It's nothing to you, Barbara, what my expectations were. You girls have managed to feather your own nest well, while I'm turned off a beggar," Geoff said doggedly.

"How dare you!" cried Barbara, in a flare of hurt anger. She was right when she said it was impossible for her to hold in her temper. "What a despicable mind you've got, Geoff! I'm ashamed to own you for a brother——"

"Barby! Barby!" Nell plucked hastily at the wildly indignant girl's sleeve. "Stop, before you say what you'll be sorry for afterwards. Geoff never meant anything wrong; he couldn't, about his own sisters, could you, Geoff? Speak, dear!" Nell's soft hands went round Geoff's neck, but, shaking her off, the young man stood up. He felt he had gone too far.

"Well, you ought to have some feeling, you girls who have got everything, for a poor chap who has got nothing," he said, apologetically.

"I knew it! I told you he didn't mean anything," cried Nell, with a sob in her voice, and slipping her hand through Geoff's arm, she stood beside him as though to back him up before all the world.

"Nell hasn't much spirit," mentally said Anne of Cleves, as she regarded the *tableau* in silent disapproval.

"I don't quite follow your meaning, Geoff," began Barbara, stiffly. She had cooled down outwardly, but a fire of stung pride raged within her at Geoff's insulting insinuation.

"Oh, never mind!" interrupted her brother. "You women do catch up words and make mountains of mole hills."

Evidently Master Geoff wanted to wriggle out of the predicament which his unbridled tongue had landed him into. Possibly he had suddenly remembered that above all things he could not afford to quarrel with his sisters, for he had said what was correct when he declared his pockets were empty. The fact was, Geoff Cleeve never dreamed that it would be necessary to return to his situation. He had made so sure of being his uncle's heir. Indeed, he had bragged to the set of youths of the period, to which he belonged, that he was going down to take possession of his property. Instead, he must now slink back to his desk, not a penny the richer by his uncle's death. It was a humiliating position, and one that Geoff knew not how to face. But the hardest of all was to smother down his disappointment, as he felt he must. He was literally penniless, and to quarrel with his sisters was the last thing he ought to do.

Struggling to control himself, therefore, Geoff sat down again, and, with as good a grace as he could muster, he talked over the new footing on which his sisters stood.

Barbara still held herself slightly aloof, however; she could not forget the manner in which her brother had laid bare his thoughts as to the injustice of the will.

"All you've got to do, of course, is to keep on as usual; you've the same income to work with as when Uncle Phil was here. Old Smythe will draw the rents, and pay them out to you quarterly or monthly, as you think fit, no doubt. By the way, have you got any ready money among you?" Geoff ended, with a suspicious jerk in his voice. Even he felt embarrassed to have to beg from his sisters.

"We haven't any at all, except our pocket money," said Barbara, with a glow of vexation on her cheeks. It certainly did seem unnatural for Geoff to have to plead to her and her sisters for money. Perhaps Uncle Phil might have—but no! Not a shadow of blame must touch the dear old guardian, who had been so tender to his brother's orphans.

The sisters scraped together their savings, and Geoff Cleeve, in a day or two, took his leave of Brimsby, with a moody brow and ten pounds in his pocket.

"You'll come down again soon, dear old Geoff, won't you?" said Nell, hanging upon him as the good-byes were said.

"I don't care if I never do," muttered Geoff, savagely, as his train steamed out of Albury, the nearest station to Brimsby, and he watched, half disdainfully, Nell's fluttering handkerchief as she stood on the platform.

CHAPTER IV.

A SUMMARY INTRODUCTION.

IT was three months after. Time is the best of all doctors, and the wound caused by good old Uncle Phil's death was already healed over. The Cleeve girls had settled down as joint mistresses of the Round House. They had even begun to go out a little, for Brimsby rather prided itself on its efficiency in the art of entertaining, luncheons and afternoon tea-drinkings being the popular forms.

"Considering the English climate, it's much safer never to risk the evening air," said gentle Mrs. Iremonger, and the suggestion grew to be the rule. Of course, there were divers little musical parties, particularly at two houses in the village—that of the Vicar, whose wife was a young, brisk woman, and at Lawyer Smythe's, whose son Teddy possessed a tenor voice—a feeble one, but backboned by his own inordinate conceit in the same. Teddy Smythe likewise performed on the banjo, and was, in consequence, looked upon as the village musical authority. The young man was no common everyday mortal; his soul was brimming over with a worship of the Ideal. The best and brightest of us, however, are weighed down in our flights upward to Parnassus by a touch of earth. Teddy Smythe's cross was his extreme stoutness—indeed, robustness. He was hopelessly healthy. Had his bias been to athletic exercises, he might have held his superabundant fat well in hand. But there is something conducive to the increase of adipose matter in such a sedative as incessant banjo-playing—to the performer. In addition to his worship of the arts, Teddy was consumed with a profound passion for Barbara Cleeve, who, for her part, regarded the sighing of her stout lover much as the disdainful moon regards the baying of a puppy-dog.

"She needn't look down on our Teddy so!" his mother would say, resentfully. "The time will come when the boy will fill his father's shoes, and they are not to be despised."

"I don't believe Teddy's feet will ever fit dad's shoes!" said Katie, the youngest of the Smythe girls.

The lawyer was a tall, gaunt man, whereas Teddy's size went all to breadth.

"Mother dear," went on Katie, "do let us have a little party this week. We've got a new glee to practise, and I'm sure the Cleeve girls will gladly come. It's three months since their trouble, and didn't you notice that Barbara and Anne have taken their crape off already? As for Nell, she'd moon about in deep mourning all her days."

"Well, my dears, I don't mind your having a little evenin' this week," said Mrs. Smythe, whose "g's" were as slippery as some folks' "h's." "But I insist on having two or three elderly people as well. There's the Commander, he's a bachelor, if you do call him old; and there's Miss Morley—she don't mind the night air. It would make it a bit merrier for father and me, you see."

"Oh, you darling mother!" said Katie Smythe, condescendingly. "Of course you may have the old things. It's my belief you'd like to make up a match between the Commander and Miss Morley!"

There was a little frightened scream of laughter from the rest of the Smythe girls at Katie's audacious suggestion.

Nobody liked Miss Morley. It was not because she was old; certainly not. Mrs. Iremonger, who lived in the cottage whose grounds adjoined those of Miss Morley, was, as far as one could judge from appearance—for neither of the ladies published their ages to the four winds—much older than her unpopular neighbour. Neither was it because she was ill-favoured or stingy. Miss Morley, who was quite the best off, as regards actual income, of the Brimsby circle, was not at all tight-handed with her money. She liked, on the contrary, to give rather lavishly, and it was to her, first of all, that the parson, as a rule, carried his subscription-book for any charity.

"Miss Morley always heads the list so well; she sets such an admirable example to the parish, my dear!" the good man would remark as he drew on his gloves for a round of begging visits.

"Yes; I must say she comes down handsomely!" grudgingly admitted "my dear," who was, naturally, a thorough contrast to her rather pedantic spouse, and usually spoke out her mind in broad Saxon. Indeed, if Mrs. Clayton were not a lord's grand-daughter, she really would have been called a vulgar little thing; but, under the circumstances, well—Brimsby only said of her that she was rather brusque.

"But," went on the parson's wife, "if I were you, I should feel desperately inclined to slap the money straight back when it's accompanied by that horrid sneer of hers."

Yes, that was it. Miss Morley had a sneer; and it would be difficult for one who possesses such an unlovely habit to obtain the affection of any fellow-creature.

It is not to be supposed that Miss Morley was born with a sneer, which is a thing acquired later in life, and sometimes, like greatness, is thrust upon one—by circumstances. There were those in the village who understood the cause of this warp in Miss Morley's disposition. Mrs. Iremonger was one, and, possibly, that accounted for the patient gentleness with which she treated her neighbour's sarcasms. Long, long ago,

> "When all the world was young, love,
> And all the trees were green,
> And every goose a swan, love,
> And every lass a queen,"

when even Miss Morley was youthful, the lover that most girls have was beguiled from her—stolen by the little, sweet tongued young sister whom Miss Morley had petted and idolised. It was a cruel story; and the cruellest sting was that the thief had been so dear to the bereft woman. It was on that occasion Jane Morley's sneer had been born, and it had thriven until she became its miserable slave. All things were smirched and blighted by it, and people grew to fear Miss Morley

—everybody, that was, but Mrs. Iremonger. "Poor hurt soul!" she would say, pitifully. "Let us bear with her. Think of what she has lost out of her life. What is she but a bankrupt in heart?"

But Miss Morley by no means shut herself away from the world, On the contrary, she expected as a right to be invited to every entertainment going, sometimes for the sheer pleasure of snapping a refusal; at others, for providing food whereupon to exercise her unlovely sneer.

On the occasion of Mrs. Smythe's "little evenin'," therefore, Miss Morley was the first to arrive in the lawyer's drawing-room.

"You honour our simple gathering, my dear Miss Morley," said her host, genially, as he conducted the stern, spare guest to the most comfortably cushioned seat in the room, in which she sat much as a ramrod would recline.

"Oh, I don't know about that. I came because it doesn't do to let the young people of the day have too much of their own way. We'd soon be elbowed off the face of the earth if we didn't hold the purse-strings. Thank goodness for that privilege!" Miss Morley laughed disagreeably as she glanced round the room through her *pince-nez*. "Katie, my good girl, what a stoop you're getting, and how yellow that blue gown makes you look! Dear me, Mr. Teddy, you are stouter than ever, quite the alderman!" Turning to the other young Smythes, Miss Morley fired off her snap-shots until she had succeeded in making each uncomfortable, after which she directed her attention to the guests who were beginning to arrive.

Brisk little Mrs. Clayton came into the room like a fresh south-west breeze, her tall, lanky husband, the parson, at her back. Then the mild little Commander slipped in, nervously anxious to find a sheltering corner. And, presently, a deeper glow on Teddy's rubicund visage announced that, for him, the one and only "she" had arrived. Tall and passing fair, Barbara Cleeve, followed by her two sisters, floated into the room. For a country girl, Barbara was astonishingly well-bred looking; she moved with the grace of an Andalusian, thanks to a Spanish great-grandmother she could count among her mother's ancestors. It was a hereditary grace, and would have served to distinguish the girl anywhere. But, apart from it, Barbara was undeniably beautiful, and her thin black evening-dress accentuated her brilliant fairness. Even Miss Morley was tongue-tied as this vision filled the room with a new dignity. Truly, Barbara was correct in her appraising of her own beauty.

The Commander gazed at her majestic young figure as she came up the long room, and told himself enthusiastically that Barbara Cleeve was a princess, nothing less. As for Teddy Smythe, he was reduced, temporarily, to speechlessness in her presence. In his abject confusion, he was thankful to retire into the corner where Anne of Cleves had settled her prim, small self, and talk random platitudes to her while his pale eyes drank in the beauty of her eldest sister. But the musical feature of Brimsby was soon dragged out of hiding, to perform on his "other self," the banjo.

"Come and sit by me, my dear!" Mrs. Smythe pulled Nell's skirt as she passed. The girl was a favourite with the good-humoured, motherly woman. "My love," she whispered, "we've got such a surprise for you all. My husband met the new bank manager, Mr. Ponsonby, at Albury market this morning, and asked him to look in this evenin', in an easy way, and he's actually coming. Oh, and, Nell, it's so vexatious! I've left my glasses down in the morning-room somewhere, and though I've sent Katie down twice she can't find 'em. I'm not able to see an inch before me without them, and here's this stranger expected every minute!"

"Let me run down and search for them, do!" said Nell, good-naturedly.

"*Would* you? That is good of you, my dear. My breathing is so bad, what with this asthma and the flurry, that I can't get up and down stairs so——" But there was nobody listening to Mrs. Smythe, for under cover of the twanging of Teddy's banjo Nell had slipped from the room.

Flying down the staircase went Nell Cleeve, her head bent, her sweet eyes lowered as she took the last three steps in a flying jump. There was a sudden, long-drawn-out cry of pain, and the girl lay in a heap on the hall floor, with a foot sprained. Then there was silence. From upstairs came the twanging of Teddy's banjo, and the twitter of Teddy's feeble tenor, telling the story of his love in song.

"My poor little girl! What on earth have you done?"

A pair of strong arms lifted the light, huddled figure, in its flimsy, black draperies, and a pair of honest brown orbs looked down, brimming with friendly pity, into the raised grey eyes, full of pain, that belonged to Nell Cleeve. (*To be continued.*)

GENTLEMANLY HUSBANDS.

A WOMAN writing recently on the subject of happy home life, remarked that she had been married over eight years and her husband had "never spoken a cross word to her, even at house-cleaning time." Another boasts that her husband can do any little odd job in the house without the aid of strong language. Well and good; but why this public laudation of a man because he is a gentleman? Let us have done with this silly sentimentality which says that man has, somehow, an inborn right to be a bear or a stone during trying domestic experiences. In behalf of those legions of husbands who are neither selfish nor blind I raise my protest. A man may be uncomfortable when the house is all upset, his wife tired out, and the children cross; he may bruise his fingers and blacken his hands in doing needed household repairs; but you and I know plenty of husbands who go through all these vexing times and neither lose their tempers nor vent their impatience upon their wives.

If your husband is your tower of strength, as God intended him to be, you have cause for gratitude; but well-mannered and considerate men are not unusual, and common civility is not a peculiar and therefore remarkable virtue in a husband. B.

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AT SUNSET-TIME.

WHEN the daily work is ending,
When the sun is in the west,
And the shadows are descending,
Oh, how sweet the time of rest!

To his peaceful cot returning,
Comes the toiler o'er the lea,
Homeward to the love-light burning
In the eyes he joys to see.

"Father's coming!" oft repeating,
Child and mother watch and wait;
Fond will be the happy greeting,
When his step is at the gate.

Left behind are thoughts of sadness,
Troubles all seem laid aside
In the home of rest and gladness,
At the tranquil sunset-tide.

M. S. H.

CROTCHETY CHILDREN.

BY A SUPERANNUATED GOVERNESS.

I.—THE PASSIONATE CHILD.

EVERYBODY thinks he can read aloud better than most people, and every woman is convinced that she can manage children better than her neighbour. That's a pretty large statement I know, but if you will just deduct a little from it you will find it correct.

Needless to say, I am one of the people who pride themselves on the management of children, and if experience counts for anything I ought to be a competent judge. Twenty years of teaching the young idea how to shoot; twenty years of training the plant in the way it should go, snipping a superfluous piece off here, nailing down a wandering branch there; twenty years of putting up with tempers as varied and as varying as the clouds of heaven; twenty years of trying to draw out the good and efface the bad—surely if I am not a perfect numskull I ought by this time to have taken my degree in the university of Practice, and be competent to do a little in the way of precept.

Looking back over the years that have gone, it seems to me that women's most general mistake with regard to children is that they want to treat them all alike. A young mother or governess has a theory, and she sets to work to carry this into practice with every child that comes into her power. Now, this is a fatal mistake. No two children are exactly alike in face and form, no two children are exactly alike in disposition, in temper, or in brain. If you happen to get hold of children who are what I may call limp, who have no strong mental or moral backbone of their own, you may succeed in squashing them into the mould which has fitted many others. With what result? They will be limp and backboneless, perhaps to the end of their days—they will have no individuality, they will have no character, they will lean upon other people so long as they can get someone to lean upon. Whether their props are good or bad is quite a secondary consideration, provided they are strong; and, finally, when they can find a prop no longer, they will die out, like Mrs. Copperfield, for want of making an effort. No, children's characters cannot be moulded like so many bricks, made exactly to measurement and warranted to fit into the exact place we choose for them.

The first duty, then, of every mother is to watch the babies as they arrive, and find out what are their strongest good points, what their particular bad ones. She must have no theories beyond the two, "Take this child and nurse it for Me," and "God so loved the world."

If you realise the truth of the first, you will remember that you are nursing the child for its Heavenly Father, and that in His own good time He will "give thee thy wages"—the reward of seeing the child you have tended so carefully grow up into a good, God-fearing man, and of feeling when your face is growing pale under the cold touch of death that you have done what you could.

And if the child is extra troublesome to manage, it will comfort you to remember that there must be some good part in everyone, otherwise He who is all goodness could never have so loved us as to give His Son for us.

There are many, many children who are easily enough trained, but there are quite as many, I think, who cause their parents and teachers plenty of sleepless nights. These are what I call crotchety children, and I propose from time to time to give you some of my ideas of the best ways of managing them.

First let me tell you that my experience of twenty years has taught me that it is the crotchety children who have the greatest capacity for good or evil. Study the biography of any great man you like, and you will find there was some peculiarity about his childhood's days. That doesn't mean, of course, that every child who needs more patience or firmness in its treatment than usual is therefore going to develop into a Nelson or a Wesley. What it does mean is this—that if only mothers and teachers will be patient and careful, they will find that the crotchety children will, in after life, show them more love and bring them more comfort than those who have given them less trouble.

Shall I ever forget the first passionate child I had to deal with? He had been almost entirely in the charge of a nurse whose favourite theory was that "like cured like." When Reggie stormed, she stormed, and then when the child had come to himself again and wanted to be kissed and forgiven, she refused. His mother, on the other hand, did anything to avoid a scene, and as soon as Reggie began to storm, she gave in.

I purposely use the Bible expression, "come to himself," for I believe in the old Latin saying that "anger is brief madness." Certainly, little Reggie used to look quite a different child when he was in a rage. He would stamp his feet, drag off tablecloths, dash down chairs, and I have even seen him knock his head against the wall when something had angered him.

The plan that I adopted with him was exactly the very opposite of that to which he had been accustomed. I sat still and said nothing. He was so taken aback that he left off shrieking, and thinking I was a poor, weak creature who was frightened of him, he began to do what I had forbidden. I stopped him instantly, and immediately he began to shriek again, this time kicking me by way of accompaniment. I kept quite quiet for a few minutes, then I put my arm round him and drew him to me. "Oh, Reggie," I said, "I am so sorry."

"Did I hurt you?" he said. He was tender hearted, as most passionate people are, and when I told him that he had hurt me very much he began to cry penitent tears, and so he came back to his own dear little self for that once.

That was our first battle, but it wasn't our last by many. I found that I had to try different plans almost every time. Sometimes I would lead him to the looking-glass, and the sight of his pretty face distorted with rage would quiet him; another time it only made him worse, and I remember his catching up a heavy inkstand and flinging it at the mirror before I could stop him. Sometimes I went out of the room, and left him alone, telling him to ring the bell when he felt better. On the whole, I think I found this the best way of managing him; but one thing I cannot too much emphasise with regard to all passionate people, be they little or big: Never shout at them—the more they storm, the quieter you should strive to appear, even though your blood may be boiling.

What was the case with Reggie? He became a power for good in the home. "Look at Reggie," the father would say when the mother felt inclined to weep over the failings of another child. "I'm sure there's hope for every one after him. Do you remember what a little horror he was as a child? and now he is my right hand."

And why? Because Reggie had learnt self-control. He was still the same impetuous, hot-tempered fellow, but he knew how to control himself; and his generous nature and warm heart endeared him to every one.

AUNT AGATHA'S ERROR.

REMEMBER, Harold, I only speak for your good. It is but fitting that a minister should seek a helpmeet of absolutely unworldly views."

The speaker was Miss Thorn, and her remarks were addressed to her nephew, Harold Clayson.

"It was Lily's—Miss Bryce's singular unworldliness of spirit which first attracted me," answered the young man steadily.

"Unworldliness!" cried his aunt, "when she goes to her Sunday class dressed more fit for a ball!"

"You have no right to judge so harshly," said Harold, rather warmly.

"We shall see!" was Miss Thorn's sharp response, and the subject was dropped.

Nevertheless, the lady had succeeded in sowing seeds of uneasiness and mistrust in her nephew's mind. Could it be possible that an undue care for personal adornment was the one weak spot in a character which he had deemed without a flaw? The idea was positive pain to the young minister, but in masculine ignorance of the ways of women he was unable to shake it off.

Sunday came, and with a throb of delight that the foregoing misgiving could not check, Harold Clayson looked forward to the prospect of meeting Miss Bryce, and possibly to walking back with her and her father from the morning service.

Alas! as the bells were chiming, Lily entered the house of God decked out in a new black silk gown, with red roses and green leaves of many wondrous shades elaborately embroidered upon it. A really gaudy and noticeable costume it was, and unfitting both the time and place.

"What did I tell you?" were Miss Thorn's first words to her nephew on passing once more into the open air. "Now you have seen for yourself to what lengths vanity will carry her, and I hope you are disenchanted."

Harold made no reply. Two days later he told his aunt that he had decided, on the urgent appeal of his sister Constance, to say good-bye to the village of Sandfield for the present, and spend the remainder of his vacation with her and his mother at the seaside resort where the latter were now staying.

* * * * * *

It was the last Sunday of Harold's holiday, and a glorious day. As brother and sister were returning home, after a long walk, Constance whispered to Harold with a glance across the road, "Do look at that curious old creature over there. What a bonnet to wear! Perhaps she is a milliner, or something, and is obliged to exhibit the fashions."

"Why, it is Aunt Agatha's dressmaker!" said Harold. "You know I told you about her. I suppose she is staying at the Home of Rest down here."

Presently they overtook her.

"I think you are looking better than when I last saw you," said the young man, with kindly interest, as they paused for a moment. "Does Beachton suit you?"

"Indeed it does. I'm wonderfully better, thank God," replied Miss Gunwell, heartily. "I told Miss Bryce in my last letter that her kindness had made a new woman of me."

"Miss Bryce?" repeated Harold, inquiringly, his heart giving a great jump at the unexpected sound of her name.

"Yes; it was she who helped me to come here. When she heard that I could do silk embroidery, she very kindly gave me a special order to work her a dress. And she paid me handsomely, because she knew I needed a change of air. Wasn't it good of her?"

It was not long before Harold Clayson reappeared at the village of Sandfield, and in his very first conversation with Lily he contrived to introduce the subject of that almost fatal gown.

"I only wore it that once," the girl confessed. "You know I never meant it to be all colours of the rainbow like that. It was Miss Gunwell's mistake. I wanted it black; but the poor thing was so delighted with her achievement that I hadn't the heart to disappoint her."

"Lily, you are an angel!" leaped involuntarily from Harold's lips; his eyes growing moist as he gazed upon her.

"I fear some people that day thought me more like a peacock," she answered, laughing and blushing. "Please don't tell anyone about Miss Gunwell's mistake. She must never know, or she would think I have not had the value of my money."

That embroidered gown was Mrs. Harold Clayson's state and festival attire for several years. She and her husband often talk merrily of the little episode which once made them both so unhappy; yet, with deep thankfulness to the Higher Power that over-ruled all for the best, and an unspoken resolve never themselves to think hardly of anyone without the most positive and indubitable of grounds.

WOMEN OF WORTH.

II.—MRS. MEREDITH, THE FRIEND OF FEMALE PRISONERS.

BY ISABEL S. ROBSON.

"THE test of a great character is its ability to fufil its early aspirations," says a noted writer, and judged by this standard, Mrs. Meredith is one of the greatest of living philanthropists. From childhood she was deeply interested in the cause to which her life has been devoted, and since the year 1862, when her interest took shape in definite work, her labour for the amelioration of the lot of the female convict, and the restoration to society of that outcast class, has been unremitting. She, at first, confined herself to visiting the prisons daily, reading and conversing with those incarcerated; but all she saw convinced her that it was when discharged that the unfortunate women most needed help and sympathy. After much prayer and thought she rented two houses next to her own residence in Bayswater, and opened them as a sort of Refuge, which was afterwards removed to Nine Elms House, on the Surrey side of the Thames, to be known henceforward, with the sanction of the Home Office, as the "Discharged Prisoners' Aid," in connection with Her Majesty's prisons.

From a photo by [*W. Davey, Harrogate.*

Mrs. Meredith.

Mrs. Meredith's thoroughly practical nature has prompted her in every project to adopt essentially "common-sense methods." She has always maintained that the only way to wean the convict from evil ways and to help her to a respectable place in the world is to inculcate habits of industry. She therefore, to give employment to those whom no one else would employ, opened a steam laundry at Nine Elms House, removed in 1884 to what was formerly the "Marble Rink," 134, Clapham Road. Since that time it has been the headquarters of the various missions carried on by Mrs. Meredith, and is the centre through which all those interested in her labours can direct their practical sympathy. The laundry employs about ninety-five women, who receive a shilling a day and two good meals, during which a bright and instructive book is read, or a few kind words spoken, whilst a favourite hymn is usually sung at the close of the meal. On the tea-table I noticed little nosegays of flowers, which seemed to be much prized by the women; a large bowl in another room was filled with tiny bouquets, to each of which a little card with a verse of Scripture plainly written on it was affixed. These, I learnt, were the gift of a lady in the country, who often remembers in this way her London sisters struggling "against fearful odds" to gain a livelihood and respectability.

In 1867, the "Washing Charity" was organised. Washing was done at the Laundry for the sick poor, whose gratitude and appreciation were shown by the fact that in one year 53,928 articles were "washed for love." This needful charity has, unhappily, had to be temporarily suspended for lack of funds, to the deep regret of Mrs. Meredith and her helpers.

Those who come to the Mission unfitted physically for the exhausting work of the laundry, are encouraged to learn needlework. They make hassocks, kneelers, and also really dainty bedroom slippers, cut from the best felt, in a variety of bright and artistic colours, firmly stitched, and sold at very moderate prices, varying from eighteenpence to half-a-crown. If, as Charles Reade maintains, the royal road to raising the self-respect of man or woman is to set them to work to *make* something, to set them some piece of work in which they can see use and beauty, Mrs. Meredith is working for such an end successfully at 134, Clapham Road.

The problem, how to care for the neglected little girls of mothers undergoing long terms of imprisonment, early engaged Mrs. Meredith's attention. The plan of "boarding-out" such children was first tried, but the difficulty of exercising the requisite moral supervision was so great that she resolved to establish "Family Homes," to be certified under the Industrial Schools Act, and to be open to such children as should be sent by magistrates, or chosen by the Trustees as suitable objects for the charity. To quote Mrs. Meredith's own words: "The Institution was, from the first, to be conducted on *family*, rather than *boarding-school* lines, and therefore the family should be limited to small numbers,

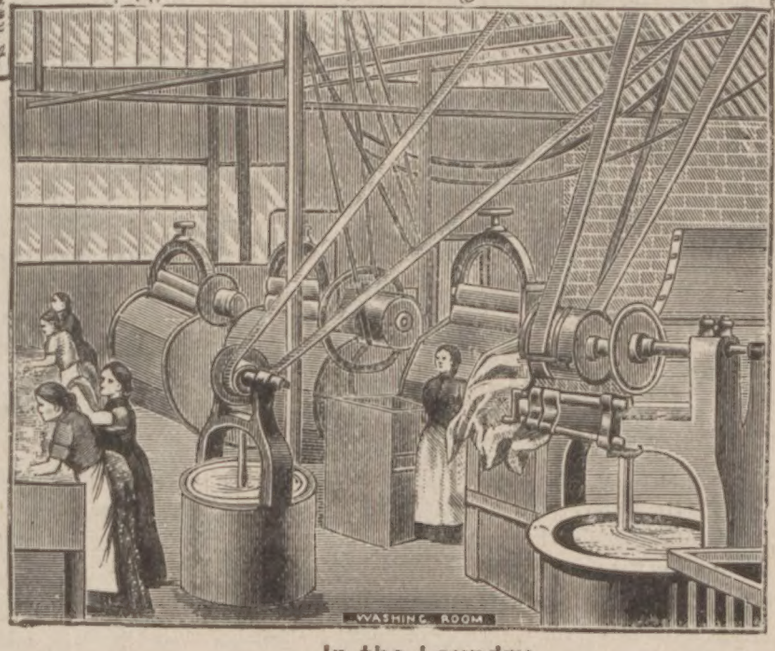
preferably ten, under the care of a respectable widow, called a Cottage-mother." A visit to the little "village" amply demonstrates the wisdom of Mrs. Meredith's plans. It was one of the bright, sunshiny days of our uncertain summer when we paid our visit, and everything looked idyllic in its country freshness and cheeriness. The massive iron gates, over which is inscribed the name "Princess Mary Village Homes," open upon a smooth lawn, round which are ranged the cottages, the schoolroom, the laundry, the manageress's house, the infirmary, a model hospital with fifteen beds (which, happily, have never been filled), and the beautiful little chapel, endeared by very sweet and sacred recollections to all those who have passed through the Home.

The Cottage-mothers were for the most part without their little family when we paid our visit, for it was school-time; but the bright pictures and the numerous "dollies" to be seen told their own tale. In one cottage we were shown a large toy cow which had once had an honoured place in the nursery of Princess May, and had been presented by her to the little children in whom she has always taken so much interest. Among the most valued gifts the Princess received on her marriage to the Duke of York, was an exquisitely bound album of photographs of the Home, with its various industries and its familiar buildings.

In the schoolroom we found the young folks busy with needlework, even the very small ones stitching sheets or knitting; for though a machine is used for the work of the Home, every girl is taught to knit for herself. At the request of my kind conductress they were allowed to lay aside their work for a little while and sing to us, which they did very sweetly, in excellent time and tune.

The older girls were busy in the laundry, arranging and sorting the week's work. We had come too early in the week to see what another visitor told me was "the prettiest and most skilful work imaginable." The laundry-work done at the Homes is highly esteemed in the neighbourhood, and also financially successful, for Mrs. Meredith told me that they make annually a net profit of £200.

The Training Home is a most useful branch of the work. Girls are trained therein for domestic service, and ladies into whose houses they have gone testify very warmly to the efficiency of the training given, and to the high moral character of the girls. Many of the girls emigrate. This Mrs. Meredith considers a wise, indeed, in some cases, a necessary step, widening the distance between them and their unfortunately undesirable parents. They do remarkably well, and only four per cent. can



In the Laundry.

be called in any way failures—a very small percentage when we remember how strong are the influences of early association and heredity.

The "Shop" at Battersea is another of Mrs. Meredith's projects for helping the poor by "common-sense methods." It is neither more nor less than a depôt where secondhand clothes are periodically sold to the poor at almost nominal prices; and only those who have worked amongst such classes can really estimate how great a boon the "Shop" is. In the corner of the needle-room at Clapham Road we saw various hampers and baskets of clothes, and were told they had just been sent "for the shop." An oddly assorted lot of garments they were; "but nothing comes amiss," said the lady in charge. "We never get as much as we could dispose of, and just now our shelves are woefully bare."

In 1882 the "Medical Mission" in Battersea was started, being conducted solely by ladies who hold medical degrees, and only treating women and children. This is now self-supporting. Several ladies have gone from the Mission to a foreign field of labour, ten are at work in Palestine, and, in spite of much opposition, write home that they now see "open doors" in all the villages they have visited. The missionary work lies very near to the heart of Mrs. Meredith, but in the limits of so short a sketch we cannot do more than mention its establishment, and refer those whose sympathy is awakened to the little magazine which Mrs. Meredith publishes monthly with current reports of her work. *Open Doors* is the title she chose for this organ, and surely there is something suggestive about the name. "Open doors, open hearts, open hands, nothing kept back."

That is the attitude with which to approach philanthropic work if it is to be successful, and in this respect Mrs. Meredith has set a noble example to all women who come after her.

"She gave her Lord the greatest gift of all—
Herself unto His service."

ON SQUINTING, AND HOW IT IS CURED.

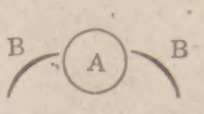
BY GORDON STABLES, M.D., C.M., R.N.

THERE is no organ of sense half so beautiful as the eye, nor is any feature of the face so lovely. Of all our senses eyesight takes rank as *facile princeps*. I am sorry to say, however, that on the whole the care of the eyes in children is not sufficiently attended to, either by nurses or by mothers themselves. If it were so, I feel sure we should find far fewer cases, not only of squinting, but of short-sightedness and weak eyes among the young, and many of our spectacle makers would have to close their doors for want of trade.

Even apparently trifling injuries may tend to damage the sight in young children. One of the commonest is that caused by letting the soap into the eyes while a youngster is being washed.

In the fifth volume of my Health Library I speak as follows concerning this: "Some nurses, and mothers also, when washing a child are far from careful to prevent the soap from getting into the eyes. Now, apart from the actual pain caused by such unnecessary roughness, the irritation induced may be a source of danger, for the mucous membrane that lines the eyelids and eyeball itself—the *conjunctiva*—is the most delicate in the whole body. It would be bad enough if good soap were always used; but, as a rule, it is the very commonest in the market that children are scrubbed with—I cannot say washed. However, having pointed out the danger, I have no doubt the careful mother will try to avoid it."

But, it may be asked, would the irritation, or call it temporary inflammation of the coat of the eyeball, tend to cause a squint? Well, I answer, if there were already any tendency in that direction it would not improve it, but quite the reverse. In so short an article and without diagrams it is impossible to describe the anatomy and movements of the eye-balls. Let me see, however, how far Mr. Printer can assist me. In the figure in the margin, then, let A—which is simply in this case the capital letter "O"—represent the eyeball; then B B—brackets, the type-setter calls these marks—easily represent two little muscles which nature has placed, fixed there at each side of the eyeball to turn it from side to side.



When the right-hand muscle is contracted by power of will, the eye turns to the right. If the left be contracted, it is turned to the left. There is a muscle above, and also one below, which enable us to lift or lower the eyes; but as these are not so much used as the side ones, children seldom squint either upwards or downwards. But it must be plain to anyone that if something happens to either of those side muscles to cause its permanent contraction, the eyeball will be drawn constantly to that side, and an ugly squint be the result.

Now, even the trifling irritation caused by soap may tend to set up inflammation in one of those tender side muscles, which may result in permanent shortening.

But the elongation of one of the muscles of the eyeball will have the same effect in producing a squint, as the shortening of its fellow would. It is evident that if, say, the right muscle of the right eye be long and loose and flabby, it will lack the power of drawing the eye to its own side, and convergent squint will result; or, if it be the inner muscle that is elongated, a divergent squint will be the consequence. But it is the inward squint, or convergent, that is by far and away the most common in childhood.

Well, be the squint what it may, no one can deny that it is most unsightly; one sometimes cannot help associating with it a lower degree of intellectual power in the possessor, but this is wrong. Nevertheless, a squint either in a boy or girl is bound to exercise an influence on his or her future career quite the reverse of beneficial. A squinting youth will find a difficulty in obtaining many desirable situations, however

talented he may be, however fit to fill them. And as to marriage—a finality, if I may be allowed so to term it, to which most young ladies look 'forward—well, I do not wonder at men fighting shy of a girl who squints!

If you, reader—who, I presume, are not afflicted with squinting—press one of your eyes to one side, you see double, do you not? Well, the squinting child sees double, which is distressing enough. After a time, however, he learns to take cognisance of only one image, and thus almost forgets the double vision. Anyhow, only one eye is of any real service, and he might just as well be totally blind with the other.

It will be seen, then, that squinting is upon the whole a very great affliction.

Perhaps if a child has not a slight tendency to squint, hardly anything will produce it,—I say perhaps, because I am not quite sure. I have heard of cases that were said to have been produced by wearing the hair too much over the eyes, or letting it fall over now and then. This, anyhow, would tend to injure the sight, and should be guarded against.

Some children are given to playing all kinds of tricks with their eyes. This should be forbidden. Nor should they be permitted to pore over books, especially picture books, in the dusk of the evening or in a bad light. Children with weak eyes should never be permitted to travel on snow-fields without the protection of special glasses. The eyesight is certainly worth preserving at any cost, and prevention is better than cure.

And this brings me to say a few words concerning the cure for squinting.

The human eye in its normal condition, reader, is focussed for long sight, but it is supplied with what is called a ciliary muscle, by exercising which we can focus the eye to near sight, such as is required during reading or writing. Now, the eyes of some children are so constructed that they need a much greater expenditure of nerve power to cause this muscle to act, and such cannot read or write long without the eye feeling tired or distressed. Well, Nature has a way of relieving this strain by squinting inward, which seems to aid the action of the ciliary muscle, but it induces the convergent squint. I hope I make myself understood, though I would rather have had diagrams. The condition of eye that I have tried to describe, and which leads to squinting, is termed hypermetropia. Therefore, if a child is known to have any such weakness, and especially if there be the slightest convergence, my earnest advice to the parent is to go to some ophthalmic surgeon, or, better still, ophthalmic hospital, and have a pair of spectacles adjusted that shall suit the sight. Early squinting is thus soon cured, and while glasses are worn will not return.

But the question which I know many of my readers are burning to ask me is this: Can squinting, after it has gone on for some time, be cured in children?

It can.

You see I give my reply a whole line to itself. Great advances have been made in ophthalmic surgery of late years, and the trouble I am considering in this paper is much better understood.

Mothers need not be afraid of the operation. It is a delicate one certainly, but not very painful; besides, ether or chloroform is usually given.

In conclusion, let me give you two pieces of advice. First, go with your child to the ophthalmic surgeon as soon as you see there is anything wrong; secondly, go to the most skilful practitioner you can find.

I may write upon short-sightedness some other day.

Helps for Busy Housewives.

CARE OF PIANOS.—If your piano has a bluish, smoky look or bloom upon the case, it means that you do not take proper care of this delicate piece of furniture. The following method of cleaning a rosewood or ebony piano case was given to the writer by a manufacturer of pianos: Make some suds of white Castile soap and lukewarm water, dampen a soft sponge with this, and wash the surface of the wood, one side at a time; then take a small piece of chamois, dampen it with kerosene, and go over the side of the case which you have just washed. Finally take a soft cloth and polish the surface with white flour. Remember that it is not wise to stand your piano against the wall of the room, as this prevents a passage of warm, dry air which keeps away dampness.

The Baby Cage has been developed with most excellent results. To begin with, it should perhaps be explained that a baby cage is in shape like one of those basket arrangements which may be seen in any dressmaker's window. It runs on four small castors, and comes into use when the baby is learning to walk. The infant is placed in one of these cages with just his head and shoulders peeping out of the opening at the top. It is thus practically impossible for him to fall over and damage himself, and yet he can make a very fair amount of progress about the room.

White Cocoanut Drops.—One pound of grated cocoanut, half a pound of powdered sugar, the whites of six eggs beaten stiff; drop on buttered pans and bake.

The Wearing of Flannel.—The wearing of flannel next the skin is a grand preventive of cold. Both linen and calico, when wet, either with perspiration or with rain, chill the body, while flannel does nothing of the kind; it absorbs all moisture, and keeps the body at an equal temperature. Flannel is useful in all ages—to the babe at the breast, to the child in his play, to the youth on the cricket ground, to the adult at his work, to the old man in his arm-chair. Flannel is good in hot weather and in cold weather. Some persons who wear flannel in the winter leave it off in the summer. This is a great, and often a fatal mistake. Bear this fact—for it is a fact—in mind, or beware of the consequences: "No modern improvement in dressing has proved so beneficial to health as the use of a woollen garment next the skin. This simple expedient has saved many lives."

Catching Chills.—After exercise of any kind, never ride in an open vehicle or near the window of a railway carriage for a moment; it is dangerous to health, and even life.

Chocolate Cakes.—Take half-a-pound of castor sugar, and mix thoroughly with it four ounces of grated chocolate, eight cloves, a quarter of a teaspoonful of baking powder, and a tablespoonful of flour. Beat separately the whites and yolks of six eggs, and beat the sugar and chocolate mixture into the whites. Add to the yolks the juice of one lemon and the grated rind. Stir now the white and yolk mixture together. Bake in two square pans, an inch and a half deep. When baked, spread some preserve on the top of one, and place the other on the top again, and crown with pink iceing.

A Simple Cleaner.—After the juice has been squeezed from lemons, the peel can be used for rubbing brass. Dip the pieces in common salt, rub the brass thoroughly, then brush with dry bathbrick.

"HAPPY AND THANKFUL."

BY LINA ORMAN COOPER, AUTHOR OF "WE WIVES," ETC.

THE other day my little girl was going upstairs. In her arms she hugged a new toy, called Mrs. Raggerty. It was a common doll, made of rags, but it satisfied the motherly instinct in that four-year-old heart. As each step was toilsomely gained by a pair of tiny, fat feet, a sweet, contented voice murmured—

"I'm very happy, and I'm very thankful!"

Happy and thankful mounted the little one, her yellow hair shining in the glorious sunlight, her blue eyes sleepy and heavy with content—Mrs. Raggerty clasped close to her bosom—her red lips unconsciously offering a sacrifice of praise.

I stood at the foot of the staircase, watching those chubby legs mount higher and higher, and learning from my little daughter a wonderful lesson.

How many of us have new treasures in our lives that make us happy? Perhaps a human love that irradiates every corner of our existence. Are we also thankful? Do we take this human, earthly love to God and dedicate it to Him with praise? Or do we forget the Giver in the gift, and think that our own good qualities have won us what only comes from God?

A new atom of humanity has been sent us—a little bundle of dimples and creases, and plumpness and helplessness. We are very happy. Are we also thankful to the Father of all for our baby? As we feel those tiny fingers clasping ours like the tendrils of a vine, do we admire and rejoice—but *forget?* Admire the likeness to an earthly parent, and forget to trace the lineaments of the Most High? Rejoice in our precious gift, and forget from whence it comes?

Our money has lasted well, our home is so comfortable, and we are happy on account of this blessing. Are we very thankful to Him who alone can give the power to get wealth—to whom belongs the silver and gold?

Our barns are filled with plenty, and our presses burst with new wine. Are we forgetting to show our thankfulness by honouring God with the first-fruits of our basket and store?

The sons God gave us have grown up as pillars. Our daughters are as the polished corners in a temple. We have done well for our family. They arise and call us blessed. Do we plume ourselves on our discretion, on our success, on our good management? Nay, let us not forget that the hearts of all are in His rule and governance, and that God turneth them according to His own judgment. A mother may sow, a father may water; it is God alone that can give the increase. Forget not the careful tending, oh! parents, but thank the Heavenly Husbandman for crowning your labours.

We are very happy.

The long journey of life is nearly done, already the westering sun throws thick shadows behind us. We are dwelling for awhile in the Land of Beulah, where the sun never sets. Do we hear the sound of the continually melodious trumpets? Are the chambers called "peace" in which we are tarrying the King's messenger daily perfumed with spices of trust and tenderness? Has goodness and mercy followed us all our days? Then are we *thankful?* Thankful, even as the props are taken down, one by one? As the clothes we have worn are taken off and laid aside, one by one?

Oh, fellow pilgrims! the river is not rough before us, though our feet may be tender by reason of our travels. Praise the Lord for His goodness even in the valley of the shadow of death.

In the furnace of affliction One has drawn near and walked with us. As we closed the children's eyes—I have done it, dear reader, and am not writing from hearsay—and gave them to One who loves them, as we composed the limbs of the partner of our life's journey, we remember there was a "great calm at that time" in the river, and we are thankful. It is well with them, and we are very happy.

True it is that behind us lies a darkened path, yet can we not sing:—

"The great and terrible land
Of wilderness and drought
Lies in the shadows behind me,
But the Lord has brought me out.
The great and terrible river,
Tho' shrouded still from view,
Lies in the shadows before me,
But the Lord will bear me through."

Ought not that to make us thankful to Him who has led us skilfully (Ps. lxxviii. 72), tenderly (Isa. xl. 11), and safely (Ps. lxxviii. 53), all the way?

We are very happy. Perhaps it is a rag doll that makes us so! Others may think our lot an ugly, bare one; our purse empty and mean; our husband or lover contemptible; our baby a pitiful mite; our sons a burden; our daughters unlovely; our life a barren one; our old age unenviable. But to us one and all are treasures! We hug our joys to our bosoms. Well for us if *in* our joy we are thankful.

"Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth Me," God says.

Would you not like to do that?

"Breaking a Child's Will."—This is a favourite phrase with some mothers. One might as well attempt to break a child's back. She who has not the patience and self-control to direct a child's will, finds it easier to resort to the whip, to scolding, and to angry fussing. Thousands of children have been spoiled in this way. Now and then an exceptional child proves almost incorrigible, and it may seem well-nigh useless to persevere; but the true mother is undaunted, and wisely and prayerfully addresses herself to her difficult task. Half the parents who talk glibly about breaking children's wills never surrendered their own wills to God or man.

The Queen's Daughters.—A good many years ago, when Her Majesty was spending a short time in the neighbourhood of the Trossachs, the Princesses Louise and Beatrice paid an unexpected visit to an old female cottager on the slopes of Glenfinlas. The old lady shrewdly suspected that her visitors had some connection with the Royal household; but, nothing daunted by her suspicion, she bluntly ejaculated, "Ye'll be the Queen's servants, I'm thinkin'?" "No," they quietly rejoined, "we are the Queen's *daughters*." "Ye dinna look like it," was the immediate reply of the unusually outspoken Celt, "as ye hae neither a ring on your fingers, nor a bit gold i' your ears!"

THE CHILDREN'S SUNDAY.

BY MRS. I. L. RICHMOND.

"A SUNDAY well spent, brings a week of content," says the old rhyme, and there is a deep truth in this saying. But the old Puritan idea of the "Sabbath" is passing away, and although its dull strictness too often led to a reaction in later years, the present danger seems to be that many children will grow up with but little reverence for the Lord's Day, the day of the Great Child-lover, which should certainly be made the brightest in the week to the children, bringing with it special happiness and privileges.

Busy parents—fathers especially, who have but little time to spare in the week—may surely give some attention to the little ones on Sunday, to the great advantage of both, for this will be the happiest day of the week if spent as our Maker intended it should be.

In the first place, Sunday should bring its special privileges. Slight things indeed they may seem to us, but they will be highly prized for all that. Children kept much in the nursery on week-days, may be allowed to take their meals with their parents, and to spend most of the day with them; while for those who are constantly with their mother, an afternoon walk with "father" will be a special treat. Those who are old enough among the little ones will enjoy accompanying their parents to a place of worship; and if this is allowed as a privilege, not enforced as a command, the child will grow up in the good habit of being "glad" to go to the "house of the Lord," instead of the too frequent feeling that Sunday is a mere day of amusement, church-going being a tiresome break.

Many delightful occupations may certainly be allowed to a child on this day; yet each should be "linked on," as it were, to the holy day by a distinct remembrance of God. For instance, a wet afternoon may be well

Sunday Afternoon with Father.

employed in colouring texts, which will make presents for the poor and for little friends, although they may not be perfect works of art.

There is now no lack of pleasant books and magazines of a distinctly Christian tone for the young of all ages, such as the *Children's Friend* and *Infants' Magazine* (issued by Messrs. Partridge and Co.), and other publications of well-known firms; but these will be more appreciated if they are read aloud, brightly and distinctly, than if the opening intelligence alone is brought to bear upon them. Bible stories, told in simple words, should form a regular part of our children's teaching.

Even short texts, with a little explanation — told, when possible, in the form of a story—will easily be stored in their memories, and prove, perhaps, in after years an armoury of strength under dire temptation. An easy way to interest children in learning texts is to allow them to join in an alphabetical game, which can be played quietly round the fire on a winter's evening, each one contributing a text beginning with the next letter. For instance, mother may begin with "*Abide with us, for the day is far spent*"—a text which will be associated in the children's mind with the exquisite story of the walk to Emmaus; the next player will give "*Be strong, and of good courage*," or some other text beginning with a B, and soon even the tiniest will like to take their turn with short texts, such as "God is Love," "Jesus wept," or "Watch and pray," while they will all quickly learn others as they hear them repeated.

"Bible clocks," too, are much appreciated. To make these, a piece of printing paper should be folded in quarters, a circle drawn to enclose these, and each quarter divided in three, to imitate the face of a clock. "One o'clock" is represented by a single word (such as "love," "joy," "watch," or "Jesus"), which must be reproduced at every hour division, with enough words to make up the hour. "Jesus" being the chosen word, two o'clock will have "Lord Jesus," or "Jesus wept," inscribed upon it; three o'clock will take "Jesus of Nazareth;" and so on, till the clock is filled, the long texts necessary for the later hours usually needing some search in the Bible to fit them in properly.

Singing hymns is, of course, much enjoyed by most children, especially if each is, in turn, allowed to choose a favourite hymn for all to sing. Hymns are so full of gospel truth, in a form easy to recollect, that they are most valuable as a means of instruction, as well as of storing the mind with Christian aspirations; and no Sunday should pass without hymns for the children. As they become older, Bible exercises, such as guessing "mental pictures," will interest them, and at the same time bring increased knowledge of the Scriptures.

The Sunday walk, either before or after Sunday-school, (besides being made specially delightful by the presence of father or mother) should have some special object of charity, if possible; such as a visit to an aged Christian amongst the poor, or an inquiry for a sick friend. Children's hearts are full of sympathy, but this is too often dwarfed or destroyed in early youth by want of any outlet for its growth, while with a little fostering care it might have grown to bless all around it.

A few flowers, a little fruit off the Sunday dessert table, a home-painted text, or a picture-book to lend, will be joyfully carried to the little invalid or old friend; giving pure pleasure on both sides.

It is well to teach children early that charity does not consist only in money-giving; the rarer gifts of real sympathy and love are highly appreciated by the sick and the poor, who discriminate very justly between the coin given as to a beggar and the personal kindness of the real friend, shown in many little ways which will be suited to each individual case, and can only be ascertained by kindly sympathy.

Odd ways enough, sometimes these are. For instance, a poor old blind woman lying in a workhouse infirmary, would beg of the writer's little son to lift his dog on to her bed, and let her stroke it. She had been an enthusiastic dog-lover in her brighter days, and the touch of the silky coat, and the little warm tongue, brought cheer and comfort to her lonely heart.

The passage of Scripture read and explained, and the hymns sung during those afternoon visits to the Union, were all the more appreciated, because of the bright presence of the child, and the sound of his clear voice singing the holy words.

Endless little ways will be found by those who seek for them, to convey happiness to others, without the necessary expenditure of money; even the poorest children may learn to help others by reading to them the Word of Life, by bringing them sweet scents and brightness in a bunch of wild flowers (to remind them of a Father's love), or even by sitting with them for half an hour, and so enabling the aged, shut out from the world, to gain some of the brightness and freshness which they so dearly love.

The little feet, led now in the happy paths of religion, will be likely to walk steadfastly in them in after years; while, if Sunday be given entirely to the world (or even taken up in separate religious exercises by the parents) this golden time of seed-sowing will be lost to the children. And if a harvest of sin and misery should be the result, no after-repentance can restore the early years of Christian training, which are the surest safeguard for the pilgrim of life.

MEETING TROUBLE HALF-WAY.

WHEN things don't go to suit you,
And the world seems upside down,
Don't waste your time in fretting,
But drive away that frown!
Since life is oft perplexing,
'Tis much the wisest plan
To bear all trials bravely,
And smile whene'er you can.

Why should you dread to-morrow,
And thus despoil to-day?
For when you borrow trouble
You always have to pay.
It is a good old maxim,
Which should be often preached—
Don't cross the bridge before you
Until the bridge is reached.

MOTHERS IN COUNCIL.

CONDUCTED BY MRS. E. M. WATERWORTH, AUTHOR OF "MOTHERS AT HOME," ETC.

February 1st, 1895.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,—No! I certainly do not approve of mail-carts, and I will tell you why. As a substitute for perambulators I think they are downright wicked; as a toy for the bigger children they are very good fun, but they contain one strong element of danger. According to an old anecdote of Themistocles, the babies rule the world, so we will consider their side of the question first.

If the baby is too young to sit up, the accommodation for lying down even in the most luxurious of mail-carts is insufficient; then, owing to there being but two wheels, the poor little bundle is very rarely on the level—sometimes its head is higher than its feet, sometimes its feet are considerably higher than its head; furthermore, it is quite impossible to cover a baby up as comfortably and as warmly in a mail-cart as you can in a bassinette perambulator. If the baby is old enough to sit up, the mail-carts are, in my opinion, still more harmful. The child facing the shafts is constantly on the slope, resting, in fact, not on the soft cushion provided by nature for that purpose, but on the bottom bone of the spine; the other child, if there be two, is tilted forward all in a heap, and kept merely by the strap from going on its nose. Believe me, "ANXIOUS MOTHER," mail-carts are utterly bad except as toys, and many a child will get curvature of the spine or weak back, if he does not come to an untimely end, in them.

Let me tell you an experience of my own the other day. I was going up a street which is rather steep. In the very middle of the road was a group of three ladies, one of whom had a mail-cart with a dear little child of about eighteen months in it. They were then in the steepest part of the hill which I had only just begun to ascend. Suddenly some dogs began to fight. Off rushed the women with umbrellas to stop the battle and rescue a favourite cur. The mail-cart being on the slope, began to descend the hill towards me. I saw what was going to happen, and rushed to meet it; but I'm not so young as I was ten years ago, and arrived only in time to lift up the cart. It had swerved to the left, caught against the kerbstone, and tipped over, knocking the poor child's head on the ground.

I gave the mother a small piece of my mind on the subject, which I don't think she appreciated. Women have got it into their heads that it is less degrading to push a mail-cart than a perambulator, and so they sacrifice the helpless children to their silly pride!

One word, before I dismiss the subject, as to mail-carts as toys. I approve of them entirely, BUT be careful that your children do not run till they are hot, and then ride in the cart to get a chill. It is better to make them take turn about each day to be the horse.

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Mail-carts are not very much like flannelette, are they? and yet my answer to "BEATRICE" must be in substance very much the same as that to "ANXIOUS MOTHER." Flannelette as a substitute for cotton is very good, and I have not a word to say against it. As a substitute for flannel—well, I can only say that I'd like to have the punishing of the man who invented it and the women who use it as such. Flannelette nightgowns in place of cotton ones are good; flannelette petticoats or vests instead of flannel ones are bad, badder, baddest, as the show pupil said to the Government Inspector.

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"AMY" is puzzled as to reading. Is it right, she asks, to read books of doubtful morality? She does not care to read them, yet she goes out a good deal, and she feels rather "awkward" when people talk about books of the day and she has to confess that she knows nothing about them.

Never mind, "AMY," it is better to seem a fool to this world and to be wise in the things which concern the next. Dare to be true to Christ. Never touch a book which you know to be written with a view to removing the boundary stones of faith or morality. You can't possibly get any good out of it, and God only knows how many a downfall both in faith and morality could be traced to the reading of such books, where vice and infidelity are dresssed up in the most fascinating garb.

Briefly, my advice to "AMY" is: When you take a new book into your hands, try to imagine that Christ is looking over your shoulder. Would you like to feel that He was reading line by line with you? Yes? Then go on. "Oh dear, no; I should throw the book down"? Then do so at once.

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"POLLY" wants to know whether it is wrong to be just a little bit conceited. No doubt my correspondent might be called "Pretty Polly," and why should she not know it? It is all humbug to pretend that people ought not to know that they are good-looking. I think this is a subject which we mothers should thoroughly ventilate. I, personally, am in favour of teaching our children to make the best of themselves in every way. A pretty face is pleasant to look upon. God gave us the regal roses and lilies as well as the plain flowers; we appreciate them, why should we not do as much for the human flowers?

Make the best of those charms which God has given you, "POLLY," remembering always that beauty is like every other gift of mind or body, a sacred talent committed to you by God, for the use or abuse of which you will have to render an account.

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One little motto for us all to bear about in our minds through the month, and then I have done:—

"Mortal! if life smile on thee, and thou find
All to thy mind,
Think, who did once from heaven to hell descend
Thee to befriend;
So shalt thou dare forego, at His dear call,
Thy best, thine all."

May He help us to carry that out in our daily lives.

Your affectionate friend,

E. M. Waterworth

HINTS ON HOME DRESSMAKING.

BY A PRACTICAL DRESSMAKER.

ONCE more Dame Fashion is smiling on black silk dresses. In the days of our grandmothers a black silk dress was a much-coveted possession within the reach of the few, and, when once obtained, so much store was placed upon it, that it only appeared on high days and holidays, such as weddings, christenings, and the like.

Fig. 5.

Some twenty years ago no wardrobe was considered complete without a black silk; the young lady aspiring to it as well as the middle aged. Now that they have again come into fashion our readers will do well to purchase one if they have the opportunity; they suit everyone, and can be used for most occasions, with the addition of a little cream lace or bright coloured ribbon. The Stehlis silk is said to unite the two good qualities of keeping its colour and not wearing greasy, all the oily matter arising from the silk during the process of manufacture having been removed. The prices range from 2s. 9d. to 5s. 6d. for merveilleux, while other makes are equally reasonable.

A combination of materials is frequently employed for ladies' as well as children's dresses, a contrast stuff being used for the bodice, while the sleeves are of the same stuff or colour as the skirt.

Dress skirts are not much draped, although there has been for months past such a vigorous effort to make draping popular. The under-skirt, however, is often made separate, instead of the usual lined skirt, the material being laid in pleats at the back and sometimes stitched down about six inches below the waist.

Basques are very little used, most bodices finishing at the waist or in a point just below. The Eton jacket front still prevails, and is worn over waistcoats of various colours and fabrics. On the whole we may say that the dress bodice is much more elaborately trimmed than the skirt, braid entering largely into use for it; in fact, we have seen bodices covered entirely with strips of open black braiding, rising from the waist in radiating lines and carried down to the square tabs which finish the waist.

Fig. 6.

Long semi-fitting jackets are coming into vogue again; they reach to within six inches of the dress bottom.

A novelty has just come under our notice in the shape of a double-sided cape. It was of wheel shape, cut in two rounds, one of cloth and the other of astrakan, so that it could be worn on either side. Some of our readers who like a variety may be glad of this hint, but in reference to these wheel-shaped capes, which would form a complete circle if laid out flat, we may say that they take a good deal of cloth and that a three-quarter length one cannot be cut out of the ordinary fifty-four inch cloth without a join.

Babies' pelisses are made on a yoke long and full, with capes of various lengths; while children of three years have their pelisses made on a short-waisted bodice, with a full sleeve of the leg-of-mutton order cut in one piece.

Fig. 5. We show here a lady's blouse bodice of a somewhat new design. Myrtle-green cashmere is the coloured cloth used for the model, but nun's-veiling or any soft material will be equally suitable, and very attractive for evening wear. A fitting lining must first be made, over which the stuff is gathered at the back and front of the neck, and also drawn down to the waist in a similar way. A band of the material is set on to the shoulders and down the sleeve puff, and also down the front, under which the bodice closes. Bead trimming is used, and the waist is finished with a Swiss belt.

Fig. 7.

Fig. 6. This stylish pelisse is suitable for girls between the ages of five and eight. Melton cloth is used, and can be lined with plaid flannelette. The skirt part is set on to the yoke in pleats and is double-breasted. A pointed cape finishes the shoulders, and can be made of the same material as the coat, or of velvet or plush, as shown in our model. The same material is also used for the close-fitting bonnet and the cuff which finishes the full sleeve.

Fig. 7. This design will be suitable for girls up to the age of twelve, and can be made of cloth or fancy serge.

The skirt is bell-shaped, lined throughout with sateen, and neatly finished at the bottom with two rows of fancy braid. Braid also trims the body in straight rows across the front, where it is met by revers which are taken round the back of the neck to form a collar. A puff sleeve, finished with a cuff trimmed at the edge with a row of the fancy braid, is used.

Flat patterns can be supplied. Figs. 5, 6, and 7, 6½d. each. Address "M. C. Pattern," 9, Paternoster Row, London, E.C.